

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T CARACAS 14758

EXDIS

FOR SHLAUDEMAN FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT EC CI PE BL
SUBJECT: PERU'S INTENTIONS

REF: STATE 310852

1. WE HAVE HAD NO INDICATION UP TO NOW THAT VEN MILITARY OR CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES EXPECT ANY IMINENT HOSTILITIES OR BELIEVE THAT SITUATION IS NOW CRITICAL. WE SHALL PROBE SITUATION WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS, BUT FORNMIN IS OUT OF COUNTRY (HE RETURNS MONDAY) AND PRESIDENT IS NOT AVAILABLE THIS WEEK-END (BUT I AM HAVING BREAKFAST WITH HIM WEDNESDAY).

2. ACCEPTING YOUR INVITATION FOR MY THOUGHTS MAY I PRESUME TO SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING: THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE AS I UNDERSTAND IT IS SHOULD WE SEEK TO DETER PERU FROM INITIATING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ITS NEIGHBORS WITHOUT BEING SURE THAT THAT IS IN FACT ITS
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INTENT. SINCE WE COULD NEVER BE CERTAIN AS TO GOP'S INTENTIONS UNTIL IT ACTUALLY EXHIBITS THEM, TO WAIT FOR GREATER CERTAINTY IS TO RISK BEING UNABLE TO PREVENT ACTION. GIVEN THE SMOKE VARIOUS CABLES DESCRIBE, THERE SEEMS ENOUGH DANGER TO CONCLUDE THE MOST PRACTICAL COURSE IS THE CONJECTURAL ONE, I.E., TO ASSUME AN EVIDENT DANGER AND SEEK TO DETER IT.

3. WE MUST ASSUME THAT IF PERU DECIDES TO ATTACK ITS NEIGHBORS IT WILL BE BECAUSE THE PARTICULAR EQUATION IT HAS CALCULATED WILL HAVE LED IT TO BELIEVE IT CAN IGNORE THE CONSEQUENCES. SINCE IT KNOWS THERE WILL BE PUBLIC OUTCRY, IT WILL HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IT CAN SURVIVE IT, THAT SUCH CRITICISM HAS NO REAL POWER IMPACT AND WILL FADE IN TIME. THE GOP WILL HAVE HAD TO ASSUME THAT NEITHER THE U.S. NOR OTHER NATIONS WILL REACT WITH OTHER THAN RHETORIC. IT MAY EVEN CALCULATE THAT IF CHILE IS IN THE DOGHOUSE NOT EVERYONE WILL FEEL ALL THAT BAD. IT MAY FURTHER BELIEVE THAT IF IT CATCHES ALL BY SURPRISE IT CAN MOVE QUICKLY AND THEN WHAT CAN ANYONE REALLY DO ABOUT A FAIT ACOMPLI? IN SHORT THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY IS THAT -- IF THEY HAVE DECIDED TO MOVE -- THEY MUST BE DEFINITION HAVE ALSO DECIDED TO DISCOUNT AND IGNORE "OPINION" AND MORAL SUASION.

4. TO DETER SUCCESSFULLY THEREFORE ONE HAS TO FORCE REAL RECALCULATION OF THE RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES. THAT CAN ONLY MEAN WARNINGS NOT EXHORTATIONS. THE NATION WHOSE REACTION CARRIES THE MOST WEIGHT IS THE U.S. BRAZIL MAY ALSO BE HIGH ON PERU'S SCALE BECAUSE OF ITS MILITARY POWER. VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA WOULD I THINK BE DISCOUNTED MORE EASILY BY THE GOP BECAUSE THEY HAVE LITTLE EFFECTIVE POWER THEY CAN BRING TO BEAR, EVEN ECONOMICALLY WITHIN THE ANDEAN PACT. A JOINT DEMARCHE BY US AND OTHERS MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE -- AND WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT -- BUT I AM DUBIOUS THAT IT COULD BE ARRANGED QUICKLY OR WITH SUFFICIENT POINTEDNESS TO BE EFFECTIVE.

5. IN SHORT I THINK THE ONLY EFFECTIVE THING TO DO QUICKLY IS FRANKLY TO WARN THE GOP -- FLATLY, PRECISELY, POINTEDLY. FOR THAT
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REASON I DO NOT THINK A PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF CONCERN WOULD BE AS EFFECTIVE AS A PRIVATE DEMARCHE. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS RISK AMBIGUITY. MOREOVER, IF THEY ARE TOO POINTED THEY MAY INFLAME BECAUSE THE TARGET IS PUT ON THE SPOT PUBLICLY, AND HIS AMOR PROPIO IS INVOLVED. IF WE LEAN ON SOMEONE HE MUST BE ALLOWED TO BACK DOWN GRACEFULLY AND WITH FACE.

6. THUS I WOULD THINK A FORCEFUL, BUT MEASURED AND QUIET, PRIVATE AVPROACH SHOULD BE MADE BY US QUICKLY. IF THE GOP APPEARS TO BE COUNTING ON SYMPATHY FROM THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AS LIME 11579 SUGGESTS, THEN WE MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, CALL IN THE PERUVIAN AMBASSADOR TO MEET JOINTLY WITH THE SECRETARY AND SECRETARY-DESIGNATE VANCE, OR WITH YOU AND VANCE.

7. THIS COURSE WOULD HAVE TWO GOALS: TO LET THE GOP KNOW WE KNOW AND ELIMINATE ANY ASSUMPTION OF SURPRISE, AND TOWARN THEM OUR RACTION WILL BE SEVERE SO THEY WILL NOT MISCALCULATE OUR RESPONSE. I WOULD THINK A BRAZILIAN DEMARCHE WOULD ALSO BE EFFECTIVE.

VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA OUGHT TO BE ENCOURAGED TO DO SO AS WELL, BUT I DO NOT THINK WE OUGHT TO WAIT AND TRY TO COORDINATE A JOINT APPROACH, WHICH MIGHT ALSO LOSE SOME EFFECTIVENESS IF IT IS PERCEIVED AS OUR ORCHESTRATED EFFORT.

8. THE RISKS OF SUCH A DEMARCHE BY US SEEM TO ME OUTWEIGHED BY THE RISK OF HAVING FAILED TO DETER IF PERU IN FACT DOES MOVE LATER. PERU WILL CLEARLY APPEAR OUTRAGED, BUT IT CAN BE SO SAFELY IN PRIVATE. HOW RESENTFUL IT WOULD BE OTHERS WILL HAVE TO JUDGE, BUT IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE LASTING IF WE APPROACH THEM IN MEASURED TONE AND WITH A CHANCE "TO EXPLAIN" -- MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER. IF THE GOP HAD IN FACT NO MILITARY INTENTIONS AND WE BECAME CONVINCED OF THAT WE CAN ALWAYS EXPRESS GRATIFICATION -- AND EVEN THEN OUR EVIDENT CONCERN COULD BE SALUTARY IN THE LONG RUN.

9. IMMEDIATE ISSUE ASIDE, LONGER RANGE EFFORTS TO DIMINISH TENSIONS COULD INCLUDE A STEPPED UP MULTILATERAL EFFORT TO STOP
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ARMS BUILDUPS. WE OUGHT TO CONSIDER INVITING AS MANY COUNTRIES AS WILL

JOIN US IN AN URGENT APPEAL FOR RESTRAINT AND SOME SORT OF ARMS COMMITMENTS -- THE EVIDENT TENSION AND FEARS IN THE AREA PROVIDING THE RAISON D'ETRE FOR SUCH AN INVITATION NOW. TO GET IT OFF THE GROUND PERHAPS WE SHOULD SUPPLY SELECTED NATIONS -- E.G. VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA -- WITH A DRAFT, ON THE THEORY THAT IT IS EASIER TO GET ACTION IF WE PUT A CONCRETE PROPOSAL ON THE TABLE THAN IF WE JUST DISCUSS AND IDEA.

8. FINALLY, WE SHOULD CONSIDER SOME SORT OF MULTINATIONAL SPECIFIC COLLECTIVE SECURITY GUARANTEE TO PERU, ECUADOR AND CHILE, WITHIN THE OAS OR SEPARATELY BY US AND A GROUP OF LA'S -- THE IDEA BEING TO REMOVE ANY REAL OR OSTENSIBLE FEARS AND ARGUMENTS FOR PREEMPTIVE STRIKES AND ARMS BUILD-UPS. SUCH A GUARANTEE MIGHT EVEN INCLUDE OR PARALLEL SOME SORT OF MEDIATION EFFORT TO PROPOSE A FEASIBLE BOLIVIAN ACCESS FORMULA -- IF ANYBODY HAS ONE -- WHICH WOULD ALSO BE GUARANTEED SO AS TO QUIET REAL OR INVENTED "FEARS".
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